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AUTHOR Garland, Diana S. Richmond
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ABSTRACT

Noting that over 90 percent of private child welfare agencies in the United States are church related, this book expands the rather limited professional literature on the distinctive characteristics of a church context for providing social services to children and families. The two parts of the book deal with the foundations of the church's care for children and families in crisis, and current and future directions for the church's family ministries. Following an introductory chapter on trends in family services and the role of the church, the second chapter describes the role of Christian scripture and theology as an impetus and a value base for caring for children and families. Chapter 3 reviews the historical role of the church in the United States in caring for children and families, while Chapter 4 observes the work of the church child welfare agency today. Chapter 5 describes ways in which agency staff members can provide leadership in family ministries offered by congregational and church community agencies. Chapter 6 describes ways to involve congregations and church agencies in child and family advocacy. Chapter 7 discusses the complex issues of funding, staffing, and governance in church agencies. The concluding chapter provides a vision for the future of church-based services for children, including the challenges of cultural pluralism and a shrinking volunteer force. Four appendices present: (1) biblical texts related to children and child welfare services; (2) tools for congregational assessment; (3) other agencies and resources; and (4) resources for child and family advocacy for congregations and church agencies. Contains 306 references. (HTH)

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